

The Midland

A MAGAZINE OF THE MIDDLE WEST

VOLUME II

OCTOBER, 1916

NUMBER 10

Last Road Song

By HOYT COOPER

My tired soul comes to the last long gloaming,
The friends that walked the ways with me have
long been gone;
I will lay me down on the bosom of the mother
In a long night of sleep that shall never know
dawn.

Never will a sound from the quick world o'er me
Echo in the deep sleep where all souls blend,
In the last hard sleep that would have no waking,
Though sun and the stars and the earth should end.

Summer will come and the golden harvests,
The old winds rise with the autumn rain—
Never can the cold chill of winter reach me;
Here with the mother is an end of pain.

I have walked the roads that others would be scorning,
And in the lonesome places I've found life very sweet;
But far away behind me lie the lands of morning,
And oh! my years of journeying they gave me weary feet.

Love past by, and left me lasting heart-ache,
Friend after friend I've lost along the way,
And the old home nest long since is bare and empty;
The wanderfoot would never let a child of us stay.

But now I am come to a long last homing,
The sun of my life is setting down the West.
Heart of me, eager for an end of roaming,
Surely thou art fain of a last long rest.

The Inspiration

By REYNOLDS KNIGHT

A September rain was dripping into the streets, not sharply, but in a desultory sort of way that made the pools of water on the sidewalks blink lazily at the electric lights they mirrored. The morning was well on towards noon, but the lights burned because the clouds were thick, and the skyscrapers shut off a great deal of the natural light at best. Despite the fact that it was an indolent sort of rain, it seemed to carry with it the portent that the weather would soon turn cold, and in the parks yellow leaves would be lying about on the damp paths.

It was uninspiring. Nevertheless Mable Tucker had an inspiration; although it is only fair to state that it was an inspiration left over from the previous day, and that possibly it wasn't an inspiration after all, but just the remnant of what at one time had been one.

Mable Tucker was twenty; her hair was light. She was tall and slender, and she would continue tall and slender all her days, for that was the Tucker women's heredity—tall and slender in this instance being a politer way of saying what was a very patent fact to anyone. There was little else about Mable to be remarked, beside her eyes. They were blue. And her fingers were bony—that goes without saying.

But in a city it doesn't matter what one looks like, for everyone is indifferent there. One might be hunchbacked, and blind in one eye, and so long as he

comported himself as he should no one would ever pay the slightest attention to him. Possibly it was this fact unconsciously active in Mable Tucker's mind that eventually led her to leave her father's farm near Lockport and go to the city. If it wasn't that, then the reason was because everything was hopelessly dull and stupid at home. But it doesn't matter. She was in the city.

Before she forsook her home she used to wonder if anything in life could be more monotonous than her own existence therein. There was the depressingly flat Illinois landscape. The very tallest thing to be seen in it in any direction was the silo in the barn-yard; and it was dull red. The long hot days of summer with their death-like nights; the brown fields of winter and the biting winds that whipped out of the north; the endless routine of work with the ruts growing deeper month by month; that was all there was to country life. She finally rebelled. She wanted life, real life spelled with capitals, and she meant to have it. So she set her face toward Chicago.

She told herself when she left that the world would hear from her, she even told her parents something of the same thing; but they were dubious about the outcome. That had made her resolve all the more firmly that she would accomplish something.

She did accomplish something: she got a job and managed to earn enough for her board and keep, and that was something that some girls couldn't do. It was work in a restaurant, it is true, but still that is something.

But on this uninspiring day Mable Tucker glanced through the front windows. There was a hotel across the street, a slender slip of a hotel that shot straight up to the sky from the edge of the narrow street. Mable was thinking how wet the taxicabs were with their rain-spattered windshields as they moved to and from the door of the hotel.

"Say, kiddie, it wouldn't hurt you any to slip me the sugar, would it?"

Mable turned to her customer across the lunch counter.

"Not in the least," she sighed.

The customer reeked with dampness; the dark stain of rain was on the shoulders of his coat and on his hat. The back of his hairy red hands were covered with fine drops of water which the super-saturated atmosphere of the restaurant refused to take up. The man was in too big a hurry to wipe them off. That was what the city did for one—saddled him with a mania for haste.

"Did I do something that I can't have no butter?" the damp stranger in a moment asked sarcastically. That was always the way. Something usually got forgotten; everything was hurried so. Mable went back to the stone jar under the water cooler where the butter was kept.

The place was in an uproar. There was the racket from the kitchen, and the noisy beatings of the exhaust fans that had no apparent effect upon the bad air. The restaurant was filled with sounds—the clatter of dirty dishes as they were thrown into the sink

chute at the back of the room, the shouted orders both to the cooks in the kitchen and to the specialty cooks in the front window, the tramp of feet, the slamming of the street door. Above all was the dull, slightly muffled repercussion of the multitudinous sounds of the street that rushed in whenever the door was open, and when that was closed seemed still to find some means of entrance.

At the water cooler Mable met Margaret Gallahan.

"Ham on rye," screamed Margaret to the cooks in the window, half the length of the room from her. And the echo, "ham on rye," came back to her above the din. Margaret always screamed her orders like that on the days her feet hurt her, and, since she was already an old woman nearly fifty, her feet hurt her almost every day. Beside the pain her feet gave her, there was nothing else that stood out in her life, except that her father had been an Irishman who smoked a short pipe, and who died in a ditch one morning at ten o'clock from too much drink.

"When is it you're gonna make the rest of us set up an' take notice?" asked Margaret. Mable started. She had forgotten she had said anything to Margaret about the inspiration she had.

"When it quits rainin', I guess," she replied, by way of dismissing the conversation, and hurried back with a chip of butter to the damp stranger at the counter.

Another customer during her absence had taken the vacant stool beside the damp one. His face was

familiar; it was the face of a boy, a weak face, pale with undernourishment and fuzzy with a downy growth about his upper lip and along the jawbones. One fancied that he resembled a sprig of vegetation grown under a board, white and unhealthy.

Mable brought him a cup of coffee and a plate of doughnuts without his asking. That was what he always wanted.

"Can't I have some more water?" the damp stranger demanded, rattling his empty glass upon the counter. His eyes looked fiercely out from under the bushy red brows.

"Sure you can," and Mable Tucker took his glass and went to the cooler. At the cooler one of the waitresses was bawling for glasses. She was a new girl whom Mable did not know. And she was not certain that she cared to know her either, for she had heard the girl swearing under her breath when things didn't go to suit.

"My Lord!" she exclaimed half to Mable in her temper. "This is the worst dump I ever worked in. They ain't no napkins when you want 'em; they ain't no glasses when you need 'em. Glasses up!" she bawled again in the direction of the kitchen, "Glasses up!"

A little girl in a gingham dress which was splashed all up and down the front with water from the sinks, came running with a great tray load of clean glasses. Her face was flushed, a stringy wisp of yellow hair hung down about her eyes, and the odor of perspiration was strong about her. The new waitress

snatched a glass from the tray and filled it and hurried back to her customer. Mable thought what a disagreeable business was the catering to the human appetite for food. She set the full glass down before her sarcastic customer. He was still staring at her hatefully.

"I'll remember you in my prayers," he said, "I'll pray for you a raise." It was quite plain in his face that the man never had prayed, at least not since he was a little child, and it was doubtful if he had done so then. He drank off the glass of water at a gulp and left.

The rain was still dripping monotonously into the street outside, and the lunch hour was progressing within the restaurant just as monotonously. The press of waitresses about the shelves of pies and cakes never abated; the huge copper coffee urn midway the length of the counters simmered and exhaled its strong odor of coffee; the omnibus boys were forever digging into the boxes beneath the counters for the greasy dishes that were being discarded. It was a monotonous life, having to wait on people, almost as monotonous as the routine of country existence.

"I'm gonna get a raise today." The pale boy looked up at Mable who stood for the moment before him, and spoke. It was a surprising remark to hear amid the confusion and the hubbub, surprising not for what it meant, but surprising that it was uttered, for the human atom in the city is a phenomenon devoid of affinities; he lives by himself alone. Mable

smiled at him, although if she had ever thought enough about the boy to enquire what her feelings were toward him she would have found that she detested him.

"I'm glad to hear it, sonny."

The boy grinned his pleasure, displaying his colorless gums. He had finished eating and in a moment got up and left. When he had gone Mable discovered there was a nickel beside his plate for her. Why had he done that? The poor kid couldn't afford it. She didn't want his money when he needed it. Why had he done it? People were always doing things they shouldn't. But she put it in her apron pocket, because she couldn't leave it for someone else to pick up. The memory of the pale boy's act remained warm long after he had gone.

"Gimme a roast beef sandwich hot." An undersized Jew slipped into the stool vacated by the boy and made the request and took off his hat at the same time. His head was bald. He was a young man. Mable walked to the scoured shelf in the partition that separated the kitchen from the restaurant.

"Smear one," she shouted into the mêlée that raged about the ranges and cook tables. Some one echoed the order and in a moment it came gliding toward her along the scoured shelf.

When she returned with the hot roast beef sandwich for the Jew, a smug man was sitting at the counter. Although he was freshly shaven his blue-black beard beneath his skin made his face appear

dirty. He smiled very broadly, showing a gold canine tooth.

"Are you laughing at me or flirting with me?" he asked Mable as she paused for his order.

"Neither one that I know of," she answered coldly.

"Aw, come now, little one. It's a rainy day, I know, but you oughta have a smile for me."

"Well, I haven't," she snapped.

"Aw now, that's too bad. Soon's I get my raise I'll take my twin six out of hock an' come round and get you. You'll smile then, won't you, little one?"

The Jew glanced suspiciously at the smug man out of the corner of his eye and went on eating his lunch.

"Oh well, I guess I'll have some pork and beans. I ain't hungry today," the smug man said, for Mable refused to speak and only stood and waited for the order.

How monotonous it was, she thought, as she went for the order. It was the same thing every day; one day was exactly like any other, scarcely varying in a single detail. The same hurrying waitresses in their black dresses and white collars and cuffs; the same orders; the same sort of customers; the same deafening racket; the strong smells and the bad air and the rumble of the city outside—that's all there was the whole day long. She had thought country life was monotonous, but life in the city was just as monotonous. Everybody was thinking only of himself and when he could get the next increase of wages

so that he could climb a notch higher towards the escape from the deadly monotony.

That thought brought to mind the inspiration she had had before the noon rush began. It was such a simple thing to be called an inspiration. It was merely a story she had read in a Sunday newspaper of a girl who had climbed up in the world by being different from those in like circumstances about her. She had thought she would try it, but the inspiration was rather weak now. Nevertheless she would try to begin being different. She would manage to obtain a raise of her wages, that would be a beginning.

She fetched the smug man's order of pork and beans, and gave the Jew his check for his sandwich. She wondered what she should do to be different; if Margaret Gallahan wouldn't scream her orders so perhaps she could think. There! she screamed again: "Cut a melon!" The sound of her voice rose high above the fearful din. "Cut a melon," came the echo from the cooks in the front window, followed immediately by: "Pick it up." There went Margaret again with: "Two in the water soft on two—let 'em come up together!"

It was dreadful that people had to exist under such conditions. By contrast she was reminded of the quiet meal time she used to know at home, where there was a silent blessing with all heads bowed and a leisurely hour spent over the food and the discussion of domestic affairs. It was different.

The rain outside was monotonous. The passers-by on the sidewalk slopped along through it like drab

figures moving through a kaleidoscope; they passed endlessly, and none resembled his fellow.

"Give me, if you please, some ham and eggs," said the man who had taken the Jew's place. He was thin and must have suffered from indigestion. He wore a white bow tie and a black suit of clothes, and one did not need to look at his feet to feel certain that they were encased in goloshes. It was evident that he was either a divinity student or was connected with a charitable institution. He drank thirstily of the water Mable had set before him. "If you please, some ham and eggs," he repeated, more to himself than to Mable; it seemed he repeated the words merely to emphasize them in his own mind. He desired ham and eggs.

She was going to try to be different and thus attract the attention of the management and so rise in the world. That was her first thought as she went to give the order. "Ham and" was the second thought to enter her mind. That was the way she would call the order to the cooks. But she must be different. Then why not call the order differently? This last thought came quickly, it sprang up like a flash in her mind, and she saw that here was a beginning to being different. She would do that. The thought made her throw back her shoulders and she breathed deeply even of the bad air.

So Mable walked straight up to the scoured shelf that separated her from the kitchen and spoke clearly: "A gentleman desires an order of ham and eggs, if you please." As she pronounced the words

they sounded strangely in her own ears, for who that had worked in a restaurant had ever done such a thing? When she had closed her lips it was difficult for her to realize that she had taken the first step, that she really had done something different.

At first no one in the mêlée appeared to have heard her. Then a heavy-chested youth, with his cook's cap at a rakish angle, looked up. He was short of stature and did not have to stoop at his work of cutting meats. He laid down the knife he had in his hand, paused a moment uncertainly, then approached the scoured shelf inquiringly, holding a greasy hand cupped behind his ear.

"I beg pardon, lady," he addressed Mable deferentially, "but I—uh—did not hear your order. May I awsk you to repeat it?"

"A gentleman desires an order of ham and eggs, if you please," said Mable again, raising her voice a trifle and speaking quite distinctly, not certain whether the youth were making sport of her or not. The youth bowed.

"I shall proceed at once to prepare the order, madam," he returned, and, with a second bow, swaggered daintily back into the confusion about the tables.

As he walked away, Mable knew that he was making sport of her. She turned from the scoured shelf and faced the long roomful. She half expected to see them give some evidence that they had heard her. She felt that surely someone's eyes must have been upon her, someone who had seen her take the plunge. But no one paid her any attention. She had done

something different, but no one had noticed. For a moment she hesitated, her lower lip quivered a trifle, she caught her breath quickly as if in sudden pain. But no one had noticed.

She returned to her station at the counter and got the smug man a piece of cherry pie at the pie shelf. Margaret screamed another order at the window cooks. The newcomer, with the white tie, cleared his throat, and waited for his ham and eggs. The same racket went on about them. The rain dripped monotonously in the street outside.

All Hallows Eve

By HARTLEY B. ALEXANDER

All Hallows eve is a hoyden eve—
Winds of November whistling,—
Some ghosts be honest, some must thieve:
None saith, ‘An it please,’ or ‘By your leave,’
All Hallows eve.

Shrewd stars peer out until the skies
Are like a sieve that’s pricked with eyes—
Winds of November whistling,—
Some folk be bold, some keep their beds,
Taut coverlets about their heads:
Sooty the night and flecked and flawed
With bottle-greens and smouldering reds—
Winds of November whistling,—
Some folk be brave and some be awed
When all the Hallows are abroad.

Dry gusts amid the crusty sheaves,
Topsy-turve of crinkling leaves—
Winds of November whistling,—
When husky voices are o’erheard
Twisting thoughts in ghostly eddy,

Hist eagerly each whispered word—
Winds of November whistling,—
Some souls be weak and some be steady;
Autumn liquor 's strong and heady,—
'Tis the dead that are most ready.

All Hallows eve is a hoyden eve—
Winds of November whistling,—
Some ghosts be merry, some must grieve;
For him that 's sinned there 's no reprieve
All Hallows eve.

The Cup as Planned

By JOHN AMID

The table with its array of emptied breakfast dishes—rather heavy crockery, yet not unattractive—nearly filled the little room.

"John Klemm! Are you going to fix that screen for me this morning, or have I got to do it myself?"

John Klemm tipped back his chair and clasped his hands behind his head with a sigh of satisfaction. Two hours work, just after sunrise, gives a man a fine appetite. "If that ain't the Irish of it for you!" he remonstrated mildly. "Hear the woman! Has to pick the busiest day of the year! With the water coming at ten o'clock, and the furrowing only half done! Can you beat it? She'd have me kill the orchard to keep out a few flies!" Since they were alone, he addressed his remarks to a large, imaginary, and presumably appreciative audience.

"Yes!" Mrs. Klemm's mouth straightened to a line, and her dark eyes flashed. She had been a beauty in her time, this Celtic brunette, and still, in her thirties, retained much of a charm that even the marks of worry and hard work could not wholly hide. "If that's not just like you, John Klemm! Try to throw it all on a woman, like the rest of the Germans! Who was it lay abed 'til 'most eight o'clock yesterday morning, with the cow hollering her head off? You knew then that the water was coming today! But no. You couldn't do your furrowing then. It'd killed you to do it a day ahead. Had to put off and

put off till the last minute. And now look at you! Had to get up at daylight, and won't have a single second to fix my screen that's been letting in flies half the summer!" She settled back into her chair with a sigh. "Some day there'll be a big smash because of this putting off and putting off, and then we'll both be sorry for the rest of our lives. Suppose something should happen to you now—with you only half furrowed-out! Then what about the other half the orchard? You'd never market an orange from it this winter. Not a single one! And do you know what that would mean, John Klemm?"—her voice rose hysterically—"It would mean the end of the place here, for us—it would mean failure and disgrace! It would mean back to the little old clerk's stool in the city for yours, and no more chances! Think of it, John Klemm! Think of the risks you run with your put off and put off! Think of the risk you're running right now, with the orchard half dead for water!"

Her man brought his chair back to its proper four legs and shifted uneasily. That was getting pretty close. The anxieties of the past weeks—yes, of the past three years, were too near the surface.

"I guess it's not that bad, Mary. Anyway, not that bad. There's no disgrace to failure if you lose nothing for anyone else, and you know we've never risked anything but our own. Besides"—he tried to laugh the matter aside—"the only thing that could happen would be to have the jumper break, and that would give me just the excuse to buy the double-

furrower I've been wanting. Cheer up! You're not dead yet! I always get there in the end, don't I?"

He rose with a return of his habitual buoyancy, and started for the door. "I'll just speak to mother a moment as I go out."

Mrs. Klemm sat on at the deserted table, fighting hard to keep back the hot, unreasoning tears. It was the old problem over again—the old hurt. John did not always "get there in the end"—even though he did have a remarkable trick of making up for lost time at the last possible minute, doing what seemed like the work of half a dozen men. There was the matter of the Chalmoner job in the early days of their married life—how much it would have meant to them both if he had only followed up his opportunity as soon as the opening occurred! And the loss with their chickens the first year on the ranch—if he had only heeded her warnings to begin in time active treatment of the colds and coughs that later proved to be roup. And the other times—ah! too many of them—searing memories that brought chokes to her throat. . . . She turned her head as he again entered the room.

"Mother seems much brighter this morning. Have you noticed it? She smiled at me the minute I came into the room, and said 'Good morning' quite plainly. I believe she's better."

"Yes, I noticed she seemed a little more herself—better'n at any time since the stroke, I think. But John dear,"—her mind reverted immediately to their clash of the preceding moments—"you mustn't

mind what I said just now. You know I didn't mean it—I never do, John dear." She rose and put her arms about his neck, giving vent to the mother-yearning of a childless woman. "You know how my mean old tongue just runs away with me, John dear. You don't really mind, do you, just because I was naughty?"

As he looked down on her, the childish pout disappeared from his face and there appeared in its place the smile that became him best. "I know you didn't mean any harm. You never do. But you're right, mostly. I don't always get things done as I mean to. But maybe I'll do better after this." He smiled again, a rather sad smile, that made him look older than his years; then, gently disengaging her arms from about his neck, kissed her and went to his work.

The harness was still on the mules, so a few minutes sufficed to take the sleek, long-eared beasts from the barn and hitch them to the queer, plow-like implement known as a "jumper."

Klemm had already furrowed half of his ten acres lengthwise. With this jumper, the share of which somewhat resembled a round-pointed shovel, he would put in the cross-furrows, jerking the tool out of the ground when he came to the longitudinal trenches, so that the water from each long trench would flow a few feet only into the short jumper furrows—almost surrounding each tree.

Klemm's water rights for his ten acres amounted to two inches—the miner's inch of the orange groves

of the irrigated Southwest. Instead of taking this water in a small steady flow, he received it, customarily, once in twenty days—when for twenty-four hours the forty-inch head would be sent through, for him to distribute over his orchard as he saw fit.

But this summer had been exceptional. Following a winter of unusually light rainfall, the extreme heat of June had taxed to its capacity every pumping-plant in the Valley, and the pumping plant in which Klemm owned shares—like many another—had broken down under the strain just when water was needed most. The result was that instead of receiving his water every twenty days, the intervals had been irregular. This time there had been no chance for him to get enough water for even a partial irrigation for more than a month; and instead of the usual twenty-four hour run he was now to receive only a part of that amount. For eight hours the water would come to him—forty inches of it—bubbling and tumbling from the cement conduits—enough to keep the orchard alive, but hardly more. In the excessively hot weather the crop was almost sure to suffer.

As the big mules moved slowly through the light, powdery loam that rose in a cloud of dust behind their passage, Klemm thought of the water discrepancy bitterly, blaming the luck that threatened to injure his crop on this the year which should have seen the recuperation of his fortunes.

He stopped to breathe the mules, for, though the work was not hard, the heat was extreme. He looked

at the heavy silver watch which he wore on his round ample paunch, and grunted with satisfaction when he saw that he was running ahead of his schedule. By ten o'clock, when the run would begin, he would have five acres completed. For four hours he would direct the gurgling streams across this area. In that time he would furrow the other five acres; two hours for the longitudinal furrows—two more for the cross-furrows with the jumper.

"Humph!" he said aloud, coughing in the dust. "Mary didn't need to raise a yowl. I'll be done in time, all right."

He finished the cross furrowing on the first half of the orchard, then changed the jumper for the furrower—a symmetrical, two-flanged plow that tore straight, steady furrows through the orchard. Half-way down the first row of trees on the second five acres he stopped the mules. It was just ten o'clock. On time almost to the second, the water rushed up into the sunlight and flooded away through the dusty orchard furrows. It was brown and muddy as it carried away the first dusty loam. A few moments later clear, trickling streams glittered in the hot sunlight.

Grunting again with satisfaction, Klemm mopped his perspiring forehead and returned to the mules; but before he could throw the lines across his shoulders he heard his wife calling him.

"John! John! Come quick!"

He hurried to the house on a heavy dog-trot through the heat and dust, his dirt-begrimed fea-

tures, terrible as any coal heaver's, strained with anxiety at the unusual summons.

"It's mother, John! Another stroke, I guess. Quick!"

He entered the darkened bed-room, where drawn shades strove ineffectually to shut out the early mid-day heat. His mother was motionless on the bed. For an instant he thought her dead. Then he knelt beside the pillow and was reassured by a flicker of the eye-lids. He placed his hand over her heart; it was thumping, but feebly, irregularly.

"I'll get the doctor," he said to his wife as he rose—and was gone.

It was more than an hour before he returned. It had been necessary first to unharness the mules. Pulling the heavy work harness from them, he had turned one of them into the small corral behind the barn, and jumping upon the other had hurried down the road. The doctor lived nearly three miles away, in the small town that was the business center for the prosperous orange area. He had answered the urgent summons as quickly as possible, bringing Klemm back with him in his small runabout; but on the way a sharp rock had torn into one of the heat-softened tires. Stopping to repair the blow-out, they had lost twenty precious minutes.

"She's just the same, John," Mary told them as they entered the bed-room. "There hasn't been a motion since you went."

The doctor came to the bed-side. He was a young physician, only recently from the medical school,

and had to battle against feeling the importance of this case which, almost at a glance, he felt to be one of his first deaths.

"Mother!" said John, seating himself with clumsy care on the side of the bed; "Mother! Don't you know me, Mother?"

He lifted one of the limp hands in his own big, dirty palms; but not until the physician's hypodermics took effect was there any response. A slight pressure of the fingers was, even then, the only evidence the passing woman gave of return to consciousness. Only when John started to rise did she show any wish; but at his first motion she opened troubled eyes, and with weak fingers attempted to detain his hand. Instantly he sank back to his place on the side of the bed, and was rewarded by seeing the aged features clear—the troubled look being replaced by one of peace, while the mouth seemed to smile.

"She wants you to stay," said the doctor in a low voice. "The end may come any time now."

John Klemm nodded dully. He was trying to think.

The sun had passed to the farther side of the house now. One of the shades had been raised, filling the room with light. Through the open window came the first light breath of the trade wind—neither hot nor cool in the great noonday heat, yet refreshing.

Holding his mother's hand, Klemm looked out on the rows of rounded, dark green orange trees, with

the myriad speckles of yellow that meant an abundant return—if all went well.

The water was still running over his first five acres; the second five were not furrowed yet. If he could get out now, immediately, he could at least run the longitudinal furrows, which would help the trees, and the crop might be saved. To fail to do that furrowing now meant disaster. It might be weeks—months, maybe—before he could get more water. If without water this time the trees barely lived, it would be all that could be hoped for. The season's crop would be irretrievably lost. . . . He had to go! His mother was dying—but it would not be fair to Mary to allow the crop to be lost. They would have to give up their place in the country—he would be branded as a failure—and would be compelled to return to work in the city on a low salary—or, staying in the country, would at best have to take orders in a subordinate position.

He had to go!

But as he started to rise, the thin fingers again pressed his hand. The eyes again opened, their look of serenity gone.

"Better not go," said the doctor in a quick whisper. "It might end things." And again John Klemm seated himself at the bedside. The room was very still. From the hot sunlight out-of-doors drifted a few bird notes—subdued noonday chitterings.

Mary stepped quietly into the room to ask if there was anything she could do, and John shook his head, dully.

"I'll have to go for a little," said the doctor, clearing his throat. "There's an important call that I'll have to make. I can be back in an hour or an hour and a quarter, and there's nothing I can do here. It's the Laidens."

John Klemm nodded—then turned eagerly, as a thought came to him.

"See here, Doctor!" he said in a low, tense voice, "I'm up against it on my furrowing. The water's coming now, and half the orchard isn't furrowed out. The trees'll die if they don't get water. So you see how important it is. You can 'phone from the Laidens and get somebody to come up here. Anybody. Keep on 'phoning until you get 'em. Doesn't make any difference what I have to pay; you can get anybody. Promise anything; only have somebody come up quick. I can show them when they get here."

The doctor bowed gravely, accepting the mission.

"That'll be easy," he said. "I'll have somebody here right away. You should have a 'phone of your own, Klemm."

"I've been intending to order one in—but I put it off."

After the doctor had gone, John Klemm sat silent, motionless, holding the motionless hand of his silent mother.

Once Mary tiptoed into the room, and, meeting his eye, looked out of the window, indicating the orchard.

"I know." John answered the unspoken question heavily, in a low voice. "Doctor's going to send

someone right up—he ought to be here any moment now. There's time enough left to save the trees."

"The run's more'n half over now," said Mary. "There isn't anything I can do here; couldn't I drive the mules?"

John shook his head—smiling with a wistful, boyish smile that transfigured his round and mature countenance.

"You couldn't even get the harness over them, Mary dear. But don't you worry. The doctor'll have somebody here in a minute now."

But no one came. The chugging of the doctor's machine was the first outside sound that broke upon their isolation. He had been gone nearly two hours.

"Why, man!" he said, in answer to Klemm's first question, "I declare I forgot all about it! Hope it isn't too important."

He had never grown oranges, this young man, and could not understand.

"I'll have to go!" said Klemm, in a half-whisper, weakly. "I've got to go myself! It's not fair to Mary to stay here!"

But he did not go. He could not. This was his mother—the woman who had borne him, who had watched him, guarded him, loved him, and worked for him through all his early years—through almost his whole life.

He saw himself a small boy trudging away to school, his mother's cookies in his lunch basket, his mother's kisses fresh on his hair. His memories of her seemed to center illogically on one particular

time—the way she looked when he had the measles. He had been in the big bedstead—the black walnut bedstead they had called it—and the coverlet had been a worn quilt, checkered red and white. His mother had sat on the bedside reading to him, just as he was sitting on her bedside now. She had sat there many hours, he recollects, and to him she had seemed very beautiful.

"I wish, Doctor," he said suddenly, "you'd go and see if you can get somebody to look out for that water for me. There are only a couple of hours of the run left now, and half the trees will die if I don't get someone right away."

The young doctor frowned.

"I don't like to leave," he said. "The end may come any time now. They couldn't do very much in two hours, could they? Half of that time would be gone before they got here."

"No," answered John Klemm, wearily. "They couldn't do much, now."

The afternoon wore itself away. The shadows on the orange trees began to lengthen. In his mind's eye Klemm could see the flooded area at the lower side of his five acres where the head of water, with no one to direct it into new channels, was running to waste—soaking into vacant land. . . . Then came again the picture of his mother sitting at his bedside on the worn quilt, checkered red and white, reading to him.

Suddenly she opened her eyes, this dying mother

of his, and looked straight at him, smiling a little. He smiled back, pressing her hand reassuringly.

He wondered that he felt no more grief. Was he hard-hearted? Had he no feeling? This was his mother—dying—and here he sat by her bedside—and thought of his orchard, drying up. There was no lump in his throat; there was no smarting of the eyes. . . . He recalled the day, some years before, when he had closed his father's eyes; now his mother was going, too. . . . Yet he felt no desire to cry. It was better so! She had been bedridden so long; it would be a relief to her; yes, it would be a relief to them all, when the end came. . . .

Her fingers tightened on his hand with a slight motion, and he divined that she wished to speak to him. Bending close he caught the words, through lips that hardly moved.

"My—little—John!" The voice was almost inaudible. "He's—always—been—good—to—his—mother."

Suddenly John Klemm slipped to his knees at the bedside, burying his face in the coverlet, while great, unrestrained sobs shook his shoulders. His mother's hand rested again on his hair, stroking it feebly, for the last time.

The young doctor stepped close, holding a small mirror for an instant before her lips.

"She's gone," he said, quietly.

Mary came and knelt at John's side, putting her arm across his shoulders.

"Good-bye, Mither dear," she said softly, to the

peaceful face before them. John, his cheek pressed against the limp hand, tried to control his voice for speech.

"Mother—the orchard—I couldn't—"

"My man!" whispered Mary.

Content

By JEAN HICKENLOOPER

I have an orchard that is all my own;
I lie in the soft cool grass with half-closed eyes
And listen to the turtle doves who call
From tree to tree. Sometimes the waving grass
Appears to me as silent, marching armies—
Oh, then I close my eyes; I will not look
Until the breeze goes by.

In my orchard I will have no army pass
To crush my dreams and make the children weep.
In my orchard, all is love and peace and bird-song;
In my orchard, the clover grows rich and sweet
And my heart lies still with happiness.

Two Sonnets

By CHARLES G. BLANDEN

I. Liberation

When, after many days of wind and rain,
The sun comes forth in all his glory clad,
Forgetting quite the season dark and sad,
Remembering not our tears, nor any pain,
How soon the ways of pleasure we attain;
Yea, not unlike that little Hebrew lad,
Who, spared from sacrifice, and greatly glad,
Ran down the mountain-side, and played again.
For lo! our hearts are like unto a lyre
Whereon the hand of Sorrow strums awhile,
Until, discordant, wail and moan the strings;
But when returns the minstrel we desire,
How soon our liberated souls do smile,
Hearing the golden melodies he sings.

II. An English Daisy

This little flower (one only) did I take
From Wordsworth's grave, full many moons ago—
An English daisy, white as upland snow,
With sunset tipped. I keep it for the sake
Of him whose spirit haunts his reedy lake;
Or hillward mounts; or yet, serenely slow,
In meditation deep, in vales below,
Paces the sod where daffodils awake.
How many times he stooped to welcome bloom
Like this, the while unto his eyes would spring
Great drops of joy, at seeing beauty born
In places far from all the dirt and gloom
Of towns—beauty as innocent as morn,
Beauty to love, to worship and to sing.

